(c) Broadly the following issues were discussed:—

(i) Declaration/upgradation of important links of State roads to National Highways.

(ii) Release of Central Road Fund as per the resolution adopted by the two House of Parliament in May, 1988.

(iii) Four laning of NH No. 8B leading to Porbandar.

(iv) Allocation of more funds for National Highways (Original) works in Gujarat during 1998-99.

(v) Approval of projects submitted by Government of Gujarat.

(vi) Completion of Ahmedabad-Vadodara expressway.

(d) Following important links of State Highways were agreed to be accorded priority for declaration as National Highways, subject to availability of funds.

(i) Jetpur to Somnath via Junagarah and Veeraval.

(ii) Joining Hazira with Surat and Dhulia section of NH-6.

(e) The 9th Plan has not yet been finalised and it is not possible to give any definite time-frame for conversion of State Highways into National Highways.

Connecting major towns of Assam with Guwahati by air transport

*89. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to connect all the major towns of Assam with Guwahati and other major cities of India by air transport;

(b) whether Government propose to connect Guwahati with Tezpur, Jorhat, Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh by the same flight;

(c) whether Government propose to connect Dhubri with Guwahati by improving the aerodrome of Dhubri and introducing a flight; and

(d) whether Government porpose to give concessions to the passengers who are travelling to and fro to North-East as there is a demand for getting concession in airfare due to bottlenecks of surface transport to the North-East?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) to (c) Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Jorhat, Lilabari, Silchar and Tezpur towns in Assam are already airlinked.

Dhubri (Rupsi) aerodrome is not fit for operation and it needs major renovation/ modification work. No scheduled airline has shown interest in operating to this place.

With a view to achieve better regulation of air transport services and taking into consideration the need for air transport services of different regions in the country particularly the North East Region, the Government has laid down route dispersal guidelines. The airlines are free to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance with the route dispersal guidelines.

A proposal for dedicated air services to the North Eastern region is under formulation which envisages providing incentives to attract operators for connecting places in the North-East region.

(d) Fares on North-Eastern sectors are about 40% lower than the comparable sectors in the rest of the country.

Pending cases in Supreme Court and High Courts

*90. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of pending cases in Supreme Court and High Courts during the last three years in each category; and

(b) the steps Government have taken so far for their early disposal?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (b) Government has taken a series of steps to simplify procedures and speed up disposal of cases on the bases of the advice and recommendations of expert bodies like the Law Commission, etc. Conference of Law Ministers, Chief Ministers and Chief Justices and others concerned with the administration of justice are held periodically and the recommendations and conclusions emerging from such exchanges and consultations are implemented and their progress closely monitored. In addition, the Supreme, Court has also taken various steps to expedite the disposal of cases, which include more practical categorisation and classification of cases, stabilisation of Benches, prompt listing of cases and avoiding delisting of cases as far as possible, and ensuring non-accumulation possible, and ensuring non-accumulation of defective matters.

Rating Agenceis on ability of Plantation Companies

*91. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item in the 'Indian Express' of 26th April, 1998 wherein it is stated that a number of plantation companies have through various schemes collected large sums of money from public and now rating agencies have expressed doubts about the ability of plantation companies to provide return to depositors;

(b) if so, whether Governemnt have received complaints from depositors against above companies;

(c) if so, the reaction of Governmment in this regard;

(d) the names of defaulting companies in this regard– State-wise; and

(e) steps taken or proposed to be taken by Government to safeguard the interests of investors?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) to (e) Governemnt of India through a press release mandated SEBI to regulate Collective Investment Schemes including agro bonds, plantation bonds, etc. SEBI is in the process of finalising the regulations for Collective Investment Schemes. Based on the complaints received by SEBI from the investors the following companies have been identified as defaulters in meeting their obligations:

	Name of the entity	State
1.	Libra Plantations Ltd.	Maharashtra
2.	Arrow Global Agrotech Ltd.	Maharashtra
3.	Okara Agro Industries Ltd.	New Delhi
4.	SPG Greengold Plantations Ltd.	New Delhi

Category-Wise Cases Pending in the Courts at the end of 1995, 1996 & 1997

Sl. No.	Name of the High Courts	1995			1996			1997		
		Civil	Criminal	Total	Civil	Criminal	Total	Civil	Criminal	Total
1.	Allahabad	683071	135441	818512	724530	140925	865455	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
2.	Andhra Pradesh	142904	5744	148648	132191	3430	135621	127647	5564	133211
3.	Bombay	202430	14681	217111	217804	16254	234058	220014	16868	236882 (upto 3/97)